

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02

INR-05 CIAE-00 IO-06 DODE-00 L-01 EUR-08 SSM-01

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1880

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

DIA WASHDC

CSA WASHDC

CSAF WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 3152

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, MORG, MASS, PINS

SUBJECT: JORDAN ARMED FORCES: MYTH AND REALITY

1. SUMMARY: THIS CABLE SUMMARIZES AIRGRAM WHICH
EXAMINES JORDAN ARMED FORCES IN THEIR PIVOTAL ROLE

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AS MOST POWERFUL SOCIAL AND GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION
THROUGH WHICH JORDAN'S DOMINANT EAST BANKER
COMMUNITY INTERACTS WITH ITS HASHEMITE RULERS.
IT CONTRASTS MYTH OF ARMY AS LARGELY UNSCHOOLED
BEDOUIN MILITIA WITH REALITY OF INCREASINGLY
SOPHISTICATED, SEMI-MODERN FORCE BESET WITH GROWING
BUT MANAGEABLE INTERNAL PERSONNEL PROBLEMS.

A. COMPOSITION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT. KING HUSSEIN SEES TO IT THAT STAFFING PATTERNS IN 95-PERCENT EAST BANKER JAF REFLECT STRICT NORTH-SOUTH BALANCE BETWEEN BEDOUIN TRIBES AND SUB-GROUPS. HE HAS ALSO ENCOURAGED DEVELOPMENT OF ELABORATE SYSTEM OF PROMOTION, BENEFITS, AND RETIREMENT POLICIES WHICH COMPLEMENT TRIBAL BALANCE AS MEANS OF INSURING SUPPORT OF ARMED FORCES. YET IN RECENT YEARS, INFLATIONARY PRESSURES ON MILITARY'S STANDARD OF LIVING HAS RESULTED IN INCREASED DISSENT AT ALL LEVELS OF JAF. SOME DISSENT ALSO STEMS FROM QUALIFIED JUNIOR PERSONNEL WHO RESENT SYSTEM OF PROMOTION BASED ON TRIBAL TIES, WITHOUT REGARD FOR EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE OF DUTY.

B. ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, JAF WOULD OPPOSE KING IF (1) THEY PERCEIVED SERIOUS THREAT TO EAST BANKER PRIMACY EAST OF JORDAN RIVER; (2) ARMED PALESTINIAN FEDAYEEN WERE INTRODUCED IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS INTO EAST BANK; OR (3) IF SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN COMMUNIST PRESENCE WERE INTRODUCED INTO JORDAN. ON OTHER FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, JAF TENDS TO FOLLOW LEAD OF KING HUSSEIN.

C. CONCLUSIONS: ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AND MORALE PROBLEMS WITHIN JAF ARE SIGNIFICANT BUT MANAGEABLE. MILITARY DISSENT NECESSARILY REPRESENTS POTENTIAL DANGER FOR KING, BUT ITS MANIFESTATION IS LIKELY TO BE OF
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UNPREDICTABLE NATURE--THE SPORADIC OUTBREAK THAT GETS OUT OF HAND RATHER THAN AN ORGANIZED COUP. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF KING HUSSEIN TO HIS TROOPS, PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR WHICH HAS SERVED KING SO WELL IN PAST, WOULD BE THE CRUCIAL FACTOR IN ANY SUCH SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. THIS CABLE SUMMARIZES AIRGRAM WHICH EXAMINES JORDAN ARMED FORCES IN THEIR PIVOTAL ROLE AS MOST POWERFUL SOCIAL AND GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION THROUGH WHICH JORDAN'S DOMINANT EAST BANKER COMMUNITY INTERACTS WITH ITS HASHEMITE RULERS. IT CONTRASTS MYTH OF ARMY AS LARGELY UNSCHOOLED BEDOUIN MILITIA WITH REALITY OF INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED, SEMI-MODERN FORCE BESET WITH GROWING BUT MANAGEABLE INTERNAL PERSONNEL PROBLEMS.

3. COMPOSITION AND STAFFING. 56,000-MAN (OH) JORDAN ARAB ARMY AND 7,000-MAN (OH) AIR FORCE ARE

95-PERCENT EAST BANKER PRESERVE WHICH FOR MOST PART EXCLUDES PALESTINIANS FROM HIGHEST RANKS. JAF PERSONNEL COME MAINLY FROM URBAN OR VILLAGE ENVIRONMENTS AND ARE "BEDOUIN" PRIMARILY IN SENSE THAT THEY ARE ONLY ONE OR TWO GENERATIONS REMOVED FROM NOMAD ORIGINS. KING HUSSEIN SEES TO IT THAT JAF STAFFING PATTERNS AT COMMAND LEVEL REFLECT TRIBAL OR EXTENDED-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS UPON WHICH SOCIAL FABRIC OF EAST BANK POPULATION IS BASED. THE KING DISTRIBUTES HIGH-LEVEL JOBS FIRST ON BASIS OF TWO LARGE REGIONAL SUB-GROUPS IN JORDAN (NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN TRIBES), AND THEN ACCORDING TO INDIVIDUAL TRIBES WITHIN EACH SUB-GROUP. HIS CARE IN MAINTAINING THIS TRIBAL BALANCE (TO DETRIMENT OF STAFFING SYSTEM BASED SOLELY ON MERIT) DEMONSTRATES DEGREE TO WHICH ARMED FORCES ARE PRIMARY POLITICAL SUPPORT OF HASHEMITE REGIME.

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4. PERSONNEL AND BENEFITS POLICIES. KING HUSSEIN HAS ENCOURAGED DEVELOPMENT OF ELABORATE SYSTEM OF PROMOTION, BENEFITS, AND RETIREMENT POLICIES WHICH COMPLEMENT CONCEPT OF TRIBAL BALANCE AS MEANS OF INSURING SUPPORT OF ARMED FORCES. MILITARY PROMOTIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE GRANTED REGULARLY ON THE BASIS OF FOUR YEARS IN GRADE, VIRTUALLY IRRESPECTIVE OF PERFORMANCE. RETIREMENT, FOLLOWED BY LIFETIME PENSION, USUALLY OCCURS AT EARLY AGE OF 36 TO 40. WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY, MILITARY PERSONNEL ENJOY MOST OF AMENITIES WHICH ARE EXTENDED TO OTHER MODERN ARMIES, INCLUDING FREE MEDICAL CARE, EFFICIENT SUPPLY AND PX SERVICES, AT THE HIGHER RANKS, HOUSING. TO SUPPORT THESE PROGRAMS, KING HUSSEIN ENSURES THAT ARMED FORCES RECEIVE PRIORITY FOR ALL MONIES SPENT BY GOVERNMENT.

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ACTION NEA-07

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
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AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 3152

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5. FLAWS IN THE SYSTEM: RISING DISSENT. IN
RECENT YEARS, RAMPANT INFLATION AND CHRONIC BUDGET
CONSTRAINTS HAVE PLACED SUCH SEVERE LIMITATIONS
ON ABILITY OF MILITARY TO PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE
STANDARD OF LIVING FOR ITS PEOPLE THAT DISSENT ON
PART OF ALL BUT HIGHEST-RANKING OFFICERS HAS
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BECOME MAJOR IF SPORADIC POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR
KING HUSSEIN. ABUSES ASSOCIATED WITH
MILITARY HOUSING PROGRAM WERE A PRIMARY CAUSE OF
1974 ZARQA "MUTINY." DESPITE PAY INCREASES,
INFLATION HAS REDUCED REAL SALARIES OF
AVERAGE ARMY AND AIR FORCE RECRUIT TO ABOUT HALF
WHAT THEY WERE THREE YEARS AGO; RESULTING
DROP IN ENLISTMENT LED ARMED FORCES IN 1976
TO INSTITUTE FIRST MILITARY CONSCRIPTION
PROGRAM IN OVER TEN YEARS. MOST UNHAPPY ARE THOSE
PROFESSIONALLY SPECIALIZED NCOS AND OFFICERS
WHOSE TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS COULD GAIN THEM
LUCRATIVE JOBS IN PRIVATE SECTOR WERE THEY

ALLOWED TO RESIGN FROM MILITARY. IT APPEARS THAT KING HUSSEIN INTENDS TO CONFRONT THIS PROBLEM OF LOW SALARIES BY IMPROVING MILITARY AMENITIES AND GRADUALLY INCREASING PAY AND ALLOWANCES TO MAXIMUM THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN REASONABLY AFFORD.

6. ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF DISSATISFACTION ARE THOSE PROFESSIONALLY QUALIFIED JUNIOR PERSONNEL WHO RESENT THE SYSTEM OF PROMOTION BASED ON TRIBAL TIES, WITHOUT REGARD FOR EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE OF DUTY. DISCONTENT ON THIS TOPIC, WHICH IS AS POTENTIALLY DISRUPTIVE AS COMPLAINTS ABOUT SALARY LEVELS, HAS INCREASED IN RECENT YEARS, PARTLY AS A RESULT OF JORDANIAN FAMILIARITY WITH AMERICAN MILITARY PROMOTION POLICIES. KING HUSSEIN APPEARS TO BE MORE RELUCTANT TO CONFRONT THIS PROBLEM THAN HE IS THAT OF SALARIES AND PERQUISITES, DUE MAINLY TO POLITICAL COSTS INVOLVED IN ABRUPTLY REDUCING CONSIDERATIONS OF TRIBAL BALANCE IN PROMOTION POLICY. (AT PRESENT TIME, IF CONFLICT IN PERSONNEL POLICIES EXISTS BETWEEN TRIBALISM AND TECHNOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS, KING WILL COME DOWN IN FAVOR OF FORMER.)

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HOWEVER, JORDANIANS ARE TAKING CLOSER LOOK AT AMERICAN MILITARY POLICIES AND MAY GRADUALLY INCORPORATE U.S. PROCEDURES INTO THEIR OWN SYSTEM.

7. ARMED FORCES AND FOREIGN POLICY. WHILE KING HUSSEIN HAS NOT BEEN ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL IN TAKING PULSE OF HIS ARMED FORCES ON DOMESTIC ISSUES, HE APPEARS TO HAVE ESTABLISHED RATHER ACCURATELY THE BOUNDS BEYOND WHICH HE MUST NOT STEP IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. ALTHOUGH ARMED FORCES ARE INCLINED TO GIVE KING WIDE LATITUDE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AS LONG AS THEY ARE WELL CARED-FOR, WE BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD FORCEFULLY OPPOSE HIM ON TWO ISSUES: (A) A SERIOUS THREAT TO EAST BANKER PRIMACY EAST OF JORDAN RIVER, INCLUDING REINTRODUCTION INTO JORDAN OF EXTENSIVE ARMED PALESTINIAN FEDAYEEN PRESENCE; AND (B) ANY ARRANGEMENT WITH A COMMUNIST POWER WHICH WOULD RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT COMMUNIST PRESENCE ON THE EAST BANK. FORMER HYPOTHESIS WAS PUT TO TEST IN 1970-71 CIVIL WAR, AND HATREDS STILL PERSIST FROM THAT TIME. WITH RESPECT TO LATTER POSSIBILITY, WE BELIEVE THAT ARMED FORCES WOULD HAVE RESISTED ANY RESOLUTION OF 1975-76 HAWK AIR DEFENSE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH WOULD HAVE PERMITTED

HIGHLY-VISIBLE OR PERVASIVE SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE
IN JORDAN.

8. ON INTER-ARAB ISSUES WHICH DO NOT DIRECTLY
THREATEN EAST BANKER PRIMACY WITHIN JORDAN, THE
ARMY FOR MOST PART TENDS TO FOLLOW LEAD
OF KING HUSSEIN. FOR EXAMPLE, MILITARY REMAINS
DEFENSIVE AND SUSPICIOUS WITH REGARD TO ROLE OF
PALESTINIANS ON BOTH EAST AND WEST BANKS, AND WITH
REGARD TO FORWARD JORDANIAN ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS
FOR WEST BANK, BUT IT HAS ACQUIESCED IN SEVERAL
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VISITS TO AMMAN OF OFFICIAL PLO DELEGATIONS AND
IN SOMEWHAT MORE ASSERTIVE WEST BANK ROLE KING
HUSSEIN HAS RECENTLY BEEN PLAYING. ARMY DOES
NOT SHOW VIRULENTLY ANTI-ISRAELI ATTITUDE: WHILE
JORDANIANS WOULD FIGHT WELL IN EVENT OF A DIRECT
ISRAELI ATTACK ON JORDANIAN TERRITORY, THEY WOULD
NOT ASSIST THE SYRIANS WITH MASSIVE AND SUICIDAL
ATTACK ON ISRAEL EVEN IF LATTER SHOULD
STAGE AN OFFENSIVE INTO SYRIAN TERRITORY.
JORDANIAN MILITARY HAS RELUCTANTLY TOLERATED
SOMEWHAT LUKEWARM RAPPROCHEMENT WITH SYRIA, BUT
EXHIBITS NO REAL LIKING FOR OR ELAN IN PURSUING
SUBJECT.

9. CONCLUSION: ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AND MORALE
PROBLEMS WITHIN ARMED FORCES, WHILE SIGNIFICANT
ARE MANAGEABLE. KING HUSSEIN CAN ACCOMMODATE
DEMANDS FOR INCREASED SALARIES AND PERQUISITES
TO EXTENT THAT HE CAN CONTINUE TO RAISE FUNDS FROM
HIS VARIOUS SUPPORTERS ABROAD. ISSUES INVOLVING
TRIBALISM VS. PROFESSIONALISM, ON THE OTHER HAND,
REFLECTING AS THEY DO POLITICAL TRADE-OFFS AT ALL
LEVELS OF JORDANIAN SOCIETY, ARE LESS EASILY
AMENABLE TO RESOLUTION.

10. MILITARY DISSENSION NECESSARILY REPRESENTS
POTENTIAL DANGER FOR KING HUSSEIN, BUT ITS
MANIFESTATION IS LIKELY TO BE OF AN UNPREDICTABLE
NATURE: THE SPORADIC OUTBREAK WHICH GETS OUT OF
HAND, RATHER THAN ORGANIZED COUP. IN SUCH A
SITUATION, EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF THE MONARCH
TO HIS TROOPS, WHICH HAS SERVED KING WELL IN
PAST, WILL COME INTO PLAY AS CRUCIAL FACTOR.

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